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THE INVASION OF MINDANAO ISLAND
10 March - 10 July 1945

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THE INVASION OF MINDANAO ISLAND

10 March - 10 July 1945

INTRODUCTION

With the return of American Forces to the Philippines in October, 1944, the Japanese dream of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere dwindled and flickered toward its end. The United States Sixth Army invasion of the island of Leyte in the Central Philippines succeeded in driving a salient between Luzon and Mindanao, the two largest islands of the Philippines.

As the Sixth Army moved north to reduce the island of Luzon, the Eighth Army, commanded by Lt. General Robert L. Eichelberger, assumed responsibility for all the islands of the Philippines south of Luzon. (See Map A) (1)

The mission of the Eighth Army was to clear the Southern Philippines of enemy forces and to support the Sixth Army operations in the north. (2) To accomplish the mission of clearing the Japanese elements from its zone, the Eighth Army prepared plans to capture the island of Palawan and the Zamboanga Peninsula; the islands of Panay, Cebu, Negros, Masbate and Jolo of the Sulu Archipelago; Bohol and finally, the remainder of Mindanao. These were to be captured in the order named. (See Map A) (3)

This monograph covers the Invasion of Mindanao, 10 March 1945 to 10 July 1945. Since the military operations and plans

(1) (2) A-1, p. 42; (3) A-7, p. 371.

of the Eighth Army for the Mindanao Area divide into two separate and distinct operations, the subject will be treated accordingly in the remainder of this document.

The first operation was the recapture of the Zamboanga Peninsula - Sulu Archipelago Area (See Map A), while the second operation constituted the recapture of the remainder of Mindanao. (See Map A) The Zamboanga Peninsula - Sulu Archipelago phase was closely allied to the Palawan Operation because of the geographic location of the two areas with respect to each other. (See Map A) (4) As can be seen from the illustrative Map A, both land masses control approaches to the Sulu Sea and the north-south routes to the Netherlands East Indies, including the island of Borneo. (5) The successful accomplishment of the reduction of the Zamboanga Peninsula - Sulu Archipelago Area would assist in the final assault on Mindanao proper by providing nearby air and naval bases. These bases would also facilitate American assistance to operations being conducted by the Australians on Borneo, if such action became necessary.

Although the Japanese occupied Mindanao early in 1942, complete domination of the Filipino people and control of the area were never attained. Actually, the Japanese confined the scope of their occupation to the main cities and seaports, with strong patrols along the main arteries of communication. (6) The rugged terrain combined with poor communication facilities undoubtedly were factors affecting the Japanese policy. However, complete occupation would have required a considerable increase in troops and equipment.

(4) A-3, p. 39; (5) A-3, p. 3; (6) A-1, p. 45.

Since only portions of the island came under Japanese control, guerrilla activities sprang up and continued throughout the years 1942 to 1945. These guerrilla activities, however, were neither completely centralized and equipped, nor trained to operate openly against the enemy. They did accomplish continual harassing actions throughout the Japanese occupation. (7) These guerrilla elements made contact with Southwest Pacific Area Headquarters and furnished intelligence information at regular intervals.

TERRAIN AND WEATHER

It might be well to discuss the weather and terrain in the Mindanao Area, since their effect on both operations was considerable. Zamboanga Peninsula itself is approximately 150 miles in length and a variable 15 to 80 miles in width. (8) The peninsula is connected to the remainder of Mindanao by a narrow isthmus. (See Map B) Its terrain is characterized by rugged, heavily foliated mountains which run approximately through the center of the peninsula. This mountainous area is partially unexplored and is devoid of any road net suitable for military operations. (See Map B) A narrow coastal area, generally flat in nature, surrounds the mountainous region. (9) The peninsula lies about six degrees north of the Equator and its climate averages around 80 degrees throughout the year, with the heaviest rains occurring during the months of June and July. (10) The islands

(7) A-2, p. 17; (8) A-3, p. 28; (9) A-3, p. 28; (10) A-3, p. 34.

of the Sulu Archipelago are volcanic in nature, rugged and abound with tropical forests. (11) Suitable road nets are lacking on these islands. The weather is similar to that of the Zamboanga Peninsula.

The area of Mindanao which lies east of the Zamboanga Peninsula constitutes by far the major portion of the island. In size Mindanao ranks second to Luzon, the largest island in the Philippine Archipelago. (12)

The road net on Mindanao is limited from a military viewpoint. There are three highways of importance, all of which follow the coast line or the plateau west of the two largest mountain ranges. Highway #3 begins on the north coast and runs southwest through the central portion of the island to Kabakan. (See Map B) (13) Highway #1 begins at Davao on the south coast and runs south and west to Kabakan where it joins Highway #3. (See Map B) Turning west from Kabakan, Highway #1 reaches the coast at Parang and from that point follows the coast line to Malabang. From Malabang the highway runs to the northeast until it joins Highway #3 again in the vicinity of Bugo. (See Map B) (14) Highway #5, the least important of the three highways, is located in Cotabato Province in southwest Mindanao. This highway, beginning at Makar, runs north to a junction with Highway #1 about twelve miles southeast of Parang. (See Map B) Numerous trails dot the landscape in Mindanao. However, they can be used by only the most primitive means of transportation.

(11) A-3, p. 29; (12) A-2, p. 6; (13) A-2, p. 10; (14) A-2, p. 10.

The coast line varies from gentle, sloping beaches to rugged mountains jutting into the sea. The most difficult and rugged part of the coast line is the eastern portion bordering the Pacific Ocean. (See Map B) The mountain range, running north and south along the east coast, rises abruptly from the ocean in most places, providing few, if any, landing areas. (15) The southern and western coast lines contain many landing sites which are suitable for large scale amphibious operations. Beaches slope gradually to the north and east from the coast for a distance of 8 to 10 miles and in most instances are of firm ground. The north coast is characterized by many bays, coves and inlets with the most feasible landing site in the vicinity of Bugo. (See Map B) (16)

Major concentrations of population exist in the two large cities. Davao, the largest, has a population of approximately 95,000; while the residents of Zamboanga number about 45,000. Cities and towns of lesser importance are Cotobato, Parang, Malabang, Bugo, Talomo and Digos. (See Map B)

Rivers and streams are numerous on the island of Mindanao. The rugged terrain causes many swift, turbulent streams which are easily flooded during the rainy season. (17) The Mindanao, Pulangi, Agusan and Davao Rivers are the most important on the island. The Mindanao and Pulangi Rivers drain the west coast with their outlet being in the vicinity of Cotobato. (See Map B) The Agusan and Davao Rivers drain north and south respectively. Notably the eastern

(15) A-2, p. 8; (16) A-2, p. 8; (17) A-2, p. 11.

coast has no major river outlet. The Mindanao and Agusan Rivers are navigable for about 60 miles inland and pre-war travel on these rivers was extensive. (See Map B) (18)

The mountain ranges in the area are rugged, precipitous and covered with tropical forest. The highest range is located on the eastern coast running parallel to the eastern coast line. Inland in the east central portion of the island is located the second range, also running north and south. Mount Apo in the southern portion of this range of mountains is the highest point in the Philippine Archipelago. (9,692 feet) West of this second range of mountains the terrain slopes down to the Mindanao and Pulangi Rivers valleys. (19)

ENEMY SITUATION ON MINDANAO

Intelligence data on the Japanese forces with respect to troops, their disposition, status of training, combat efficiency and adequacy of supply was obtained primarily from guerrilla reports and aerial reconnaissance. (20)

The XXXV Corps (Japanese Army) was believed to be the command headquarters for the Mindanao Sulu Archipelago Area. Prior to the invasion, it was reported that a part of this headquarters was located in the vicinity of Impalutao. (See Map B) (21)

Reports indicated that the combat units in the area consisted of the 30th Infantry Division, 100th Infantry Division and the 54th and 55th Independent Mixed Brigades. (22)

(18) A-2, p. 11; (19) A-2, p. 9; (20) A-2, p. 104; (21) A-2, p. 14; (22) A-2, p. 14; A-3, p. 44.

Estimates for the two operations were made separately with the total strength fixed at approximately 38,700 Army and Navy troops. The strength of the troops located on the Zambeanga Peninsula and in the Sulu Archipelago was estimated to be 8,700, consisting of the 54th and 55th Independent Mixed Brigades and miscellaneous service troops. The remaining 30,000 troops, consisting of two major troop dispositions were located elsewhere on Mindanao. The larger of the two which was estimated to number 15,500 was in the Davao area. The second concentration was considered to be located in central Mindanao with a strength of 13,000. (23) The information about the Davao area was considered to be reliable since Davao was the largest pre-war city in Mindanao and had contained a large number of Japanese civilians at the beginning of World War II.

The capability of the enemy to move troops from one location to another to effect a coordinated defensive or offensive action was believed unlikely. Some of the factors considered in estimating this capability were: distances involved, limited road net, lack of air cover for daylight movement and other terrain difficulties. (24)

PLANS VICTOR IV AND V

As mentioned earlier, the Zamboanga Peninsula-Sulu Archipelago operation was closely allied to the Palawan operation. The close relationship of these two operations

(23) A-3, p. 44; (24) A-2, p. 14.

was borne out by the planning, preparation and issuance of orders by the Eighth Army during February, 1945. (25) These two local operations formed part of the series of operations conducted by the Eighth Army which were titled VICTOR. The Palawan operation was coded as VICTOR III while the Zamboanga Peninsula - Sulu Archipelago operation was designated VICTOR IV. The planned operation for the remainder of Mindanao was designated VICTOR V. (See Map A)

The mission of carrying out the VICTOR III and IV operations was assigned to the 41st Infantry Division located on Mindoro. (See Map A) (26) This division had recently moved to Mindoro from Biak and was operating at this time under the direct control of the Eighth Army. One regimental combat team was to be employed to accomplish the VICTOR III operation. (See Map A) The remainder of the 41st Infantry Division was to conduct the VICTOR IV operation. (See Map A) Final details for the VICTOR IV operation were decided upon at Eighth Army headquarters on 27 February, 1945 with 10 March, 1945 set as J-Day -- or the day of invasion.

Navy Task Groups 78.1 and 70.1; Marine Air Groups 12, 14, 32; and elements of the 13th Air Force were to support the VICTOR IV operation. Air bombardment was to begin on J-Day minus 9 and the Naval bombardment was to commence at 0700, 10 March. (27)

Guerrilla forces had obtained control of a temporary air strip at Dipolog on the north coast of the peninsula. (See Map B) In order to take full advantage of this situation, it was planned to base one fighter squadron on this

(25) (26) (27) A-3, p. 39.

air field effective 8 March. This measure would provide additional land-based air support for the operation. To provide adequate protection for the air elements at this field, two companies of 21st Infantry, 24th Infantry Division, were to be made available and air-landed on 8 March. (See Map A) (28)

Plans for the VICTOR IV operation included proposed landings on the principal islands of the Sulu Archipelago. These landings were to be accomplished after the beach head on Zamboanga Peninsula had been established. (29)

- The Eighth Army in its planning for the VICTOR V operation envisaged the use of the X Corps. Main combat elements to make up the Corps were the 24th Infantry Division located on Leyte and 31st Infantry Division located on Morotai. (30) The 41st Infantry Division at Zamboanga and the 503d Infantry Combat Team (Parachute) on Negros Island were alerted and designated as Army reserve. R-Day was scheduled for 12 April, 1945 in the initial orders published, but was later changed to 17 April because of a lack of required shipping. (See Map A) (31)

The Eighth Army studied various locations for the initial landings. However, the Malabang, Parang, Cotabato area was finally selected as the most suitable landing site.

(See Map A) (32) Intelligence estimates indicated that no major opposition to the landings would result in this area, thereby facilitating the establishment of supply and base installations to support future land operations. The dis-

(28) A-3, p. 41; (29) A-3, p. 42; (30) A-2, p. 19; (31) A-2, p. 18; (32) A-2, p. 19.

tant location of the two largest concentrations of enemy forces, their estimated inability to react vigorously to the landings, and the partial control of the area by guerrilla forces were major factors considered in the final selection of the landing site.

X Corps designated the 24th Infantry Division as the assault force. 24th Infantry Division plans called for the landing of the 19th Infantry in a column of battalions at Malabang followed ashore by the 21st Infantry. The 34th Infantry was to remain afloat as division reserve. (33)

Final plans were prepared and units were loading for the operation when information was received from guerrilla units located in the vicinity of Malabang that they had control of the area. (34)

Based on this information, it was decided not to land at Malabang and a new plan was adopted calling for a landing which would better support future operations. Parang was selected as the new landing site. (See Map D) The order of landing was not altered. The 3d Battalion, 21st Infantry, was designated, however, to continue to land at Malabang to secure the left flank of the division and contact the guerrilla units in the area. (35) Primary reasons for the shift in the landing area were logistical in nature. By accomplishing the initial landings at Parang, the overland movement of supplies from Malabang to Parang would be eliminated. (See Map D) (36)

(33) (34) A-2, p. 23; (35) A-10, p. 2; (36) A-2, p. 23.

THE VICTOR IV OPERATION

Zamboanga Peninsula - Sulu Archipelago Area

As planned, the 41st Infantry Division (less 186th Regimental Combat Team) arrived off the coast of Zamboanga Peninsula on the morning of 10 March. At 0915 the first assault waves hit the beach at the pre-determined landing areas. During the bombardment of the beach head prior to the landing, one flight of American bombers dropped their explosives on the beach without clearance from the Joint Air-Ground Controller. Shortly after 0915, a second and third flight of American planes dropped their bombs in the beach head area, also without obtaining proper clearance or coordinating with ground elements. Luckily, none of these drops caused casualties to the landing forces. (37)

The 162d Infantry made the initial landing, followed ashore by the 163d Infantry. The first objective of the 162d Infantry was to establish the beach head area. This was accomplished rapidly and the beach head was well established by the end of the first day.

The 163d Infantry, upon landing, turned to the right (east) and at the end of the day was disposed along the Baliwasan Creek. (38) Many well-prepared defensive positions were encountered. However, the enemy had not chosen to defend them. (39)

On March 11, the 163d Infantry captured the San Roque air field with forward elements of the Regiment entering the city of Zamboanga. (40) During the same day, the 162d

(37) A-3, p. 75; (38) A-6, p. 143; (39) A-3, p. 94; (40) A-3, p. 51.

Infantry expanded the beach head and pushed patrols north and west along the coast as far as the town of Cawit. (See Map C) (41)

After advancing to the city of Zamboanga, the 163d Infantry directed its movement to the north along Highway 8A. This highway led to the foothills overlooking the beach head area and the city of Zamboanga. The 163d Infantry advance was retarded by enemy delaying actions consisting of road blocks and mines. Light artillery and mortar fire was also encountered.

On 14 March, the advance elements of the 163d Infantry entered the town of Pasananca and by 15 March captured the reservoirs located in the vicinity. (See Map C) (42) In this advance the 163d Infantry employed tanks with limited success. The terrain seriously affected their mobility. (43) Tanks were restricted to the limited road net and were not properly supported by infantry, which made them very vulnerable to enemy anti-tank fire and mines. (44)

In the meantime, the 162d Infantry had advanced without serious difficulty to the vicinity of Masilay, where resistance stiffened and advances were limited to short gains. (See Map C) (45)

By 17 March the two regimental columns had progressed inland to a line running generally from Masilay on the left to Pasananca on the right. Since J-Day these two columns had operated independently and lateral contact was not established until some time after 17 March. (46)

(41) A-3, p. 52; (42) (43) A-3, p. 53; (44) (45) A-3, p. 73;
(46) A-3, p. 50.

During the next seven days of the operation, steady pressure was applied by both regimental columns, and by 24 March the enemy defenses had been penetrated. The ensuing operations were mainly a mopping up action. (47)

The tactical mission of the VICTOR IV operation on Zamboanga Peninsula had been completed in a period of 14 days. Organized resistance of the enemy in the area was shattered; the city of Zamboanga had been liberated; and the principal air fields were under American control.

As the peninsula operation appeared to be well on its way to success, the 41st Infantry Division quickly turned its effort in the opposite direction. The final mission of clearing the enemy from the principal islands of the Sulu Archipelago was next on the calendar of events.

On 16 March one company of the 162d Infantry landed unopposed at Lamitan on Basilan Island. (See Map C) No enemy defenses or troops were found on the island. (48)

During the latter part of March the 1st and 3d Battalions, 186th Infantry, arrived at Zamboanga from Palawan and relieved the 163d Infantry. (49)

As the 163d Infantry was now available, it was used to make the remainder of the assaults on the islands of the Sulu Archipelago. The 2d Battalion, 163d Infantry, landed on Sanga Sanga and Bonga Islands on 2 April. (See Map C) The Sanga Sanga landing was unopposed, and Bonga Island was quickly secured when only light resistance was met. (50)

Five days later the 163d Infantry (less 2d Battalion) landed on Jolo. (See Map C) The Japanese did not resist

(47) A-3, p. 55; (48) A-3, p. 56; (49) A-3, p. 58; (50) A-6, p. 149.

the landing, and the forces moved inland unopposed until they approached Mount Dato. (See Map C) The enemy located in this defensive position was quickly overrun and preparations were made to capture the high ground farther inland. (See Map C) (51)

Observation revealed that farther inland, Mount Dahe was strongly held and had been extensively prepared by the enemy for a defensive stand. A combination of artillery and air bombardment proceeded to soften up the area. (52) However, the first assault on the high ground was repulsed. Air bombardment and artillery fire were used again with much better success. The air support was provided by the Marine Air Groups based on the San Roque air strip. (53) The second attack on Mount Dahe was completely successful, knocking out the last organized resistance on this island. Figures relative to enemy casualties and prisoners of war revealed that the Japanese sustained 8,316 killed and 366 captured during the operation. (54) Also identification of Japanese units during the action had determined that the 54th Independent Mixed Brigade had been stationed at Zamboanga, while the 55th Independent Mixed Brigade was located in the Sulu Archipelago. (55)

(51) A-6, p. 152; (52) (53) A-3, p. 60; (54) A-3, p. 95;
(55) A-3, p. 44.

THE VICTOR V OPERATION

24th Infantry Division Parang to Davao

17 April to 4 May

The last minute changes in landing plans did not affect the assault of the 24th Infantry Division. Landings were begun at 0800 and 0900 17 April in the Malabang and Parang areas respectively. (See Map D) The 19th Infantry went ashore at Parang in a column of battalions followed by the 21st Infantry (less 3d Battalion). The landing by 3d Battalion, 21st Infantry at Malabang was without incident, and contact was quickly established with the guerrilla elements in the area. (56)

The 19th Infantry, after landing at Parang, swung to the southeast and pushed rapidly along Route 1 toward the road junction of Highways #1 and #5. (See Map D) By the end of R-Day, the advance elements of the 19th Infantry had reached a line about 4000 yards north of the Simuay River. (See Map D) (57)

The success of the landings and the lack of enemy resistance in the area, coupled with the reconnaissance by the 24th Infantry Division Reconnaissance Troop at the mouth of the Mindanao River on R-Day, presented the possibility of using the river as a route of advance inland.

(58) This maneuver would constitute a flanking movement on the important road junction of Highways #1 and #3, approximately 60 miles to the east. (See Map D) Also an-

(56) A-2, p. 23; (57) A-2, p. 4; (58) A-2, p. 3.

other route for the movement of supplies would be available. (59)

To exploit this possibility, the 2d Battalion, 21st Infantry and elements of the 533d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment were organized as a task force on the afternoon of R-Day. On the morning of 18 April this force was loaded in the landing craft and gunboats of the engineer boat and shore regiment and proceeded to the entrance of the north and south branches of the Mindanao River. (See Map D) This force was supported by air craft and by naval elements consisting of one cruiser and one destroyer. (60) The naval elements shelled the area prior to the arrival of the task force. No opposition to the entry of the branches of the river was encountered, and by the evening of 18 April the forks of the river had been reached. (See Map D) Cotobato was occupied by infantry elements of the river force without incident. (See Map D) (61)

The next day, the river force continued its movement up the river occupying Lomopog and Paidu Pulangi enroute. Evidence of hastily retreating enemy was observed by the troops occupying Lomopog. During the night, a weak enemy counterattack was launched against our forces at Lomopog but was quickly repulsed. (62)

To further the success of the rapid movement via the river route, the 24th Infantry Division ordered the 34th Infantry (less 2d Battalion) to proceed to Fort Pikit and to seize the junction of Routes 1 and 3 at Kabakan. (See Map D) The 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry, arrived at Paidu

(59) A-2, p. 26; (60) A-2, p. 26; (61) A-8, p. 179; (62) A-2, p. 28.

Pulangi on 19 April. Active patrolling was conducted on the road leading to Fort Pikit and also farther up the river on 20 April. Reports of these patrols indicated that the overland route was clear half way to Fort Pikit, while no evidence of enemy defenses was found on the river route. Therefore, preparations and plans were made to move on Fort Pikit using both the land route and the river route. (63)

On 21 April this plan was put into effect with the 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry (less Company A) moving on the overland route. Simultaneously Company A with elements of the 533d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment moved via the river route. Enroute, the river force commander conferred with the commanding officer, 118th Infantry (Guerrilla), who reported that approximately 800 Japanese were defending the approaches to Fort Pikit. (64) To combat this situation, the infantry elements were put ashore and the gunboats moved up stream to support the advance of the infantry by fire. The area in which the enemy was reported to be located was heavily shelled. Only intermittent small arms fire was returned by the enemy and the boats continued their movement to Fort Pikit, reaching it by 1600 21 April. (65)

During this period the 19th Infantry had continued to advance along Route 1 encountering little or no opposition. The condition of the road and bridges seriously hampered the movement and the engineer effort to support the advancing infantry was insufficient.

On 23 April the 34th Infantry occupied the junction of

(63) A-2, p. 29; (64) A-8, p. 173; (65) A-8, p. 173.

Highways #1 and #3, while the remainder of the 24th Infantry Division continued to reach the area using either the highway or the river route. (66)

To develop and fix the enemy believed to be in the south, the 24th Infantry Division turned south on Route 1 and moved toward Digos. Rapid advances were made and on 26 April the advance elements of the 24th Infantry Division had moved to within 8 miles of Digos. (67) As these rapid advances were being made the 31st Infantry Division landed at Parang, Cotobato and Malabang.

The 31st Infantry Division, after landing at Parang on 23 April, was ordered to Kabakan and then to proceed north along Route 3 to develop the enemy in the vicinity of Kibawe Talomo Trail, and to relieve the elements of the 24th Infantry Division being employed on security missions for the supply route from Parang to Kabakan. This maneuver would facilitate a possible pincers movement on the enemy forces in the south by the 31st and 24th Infantry Divisions.

Also Eighth Army requested Southwest Pacific Headquarters to permit the employment of the 108th Infantry Regimental Combat Team, 40th Infantry Division and the 162d Infantry of 41st Infantry Division. The planned use of these two units was as follows: 108th Regimental Combat Team was to be landed on the north coast in the vicinity of Bugo and Agusan and to proceed south to make contact with the 31st Infantry Division; the 162d Infantry would be moved to the Parang and Cotobato area to take over the security of the

(66) A-2, p. 31; (67) A-2, p. 33.

lines of communication and supply installations. The plan for the employment of these two units was approved by higher headquarters on 29 April. (68)

Concurrently, the X Corps issued orders to the 24th Infantry Division for the continuation of the operation in the south. The X Corps order directed that a beach head area be established in the Digos area, the Padada air field be secured and the Malalag Bay area be seized to assist in the planned construction of light naval facilities. A continuation of the attack to seize Davao would be carried on simultaneously. (69)

The 34th Infantry was committed to accomplish the missions in the Digos area and to the southwest; while the 19th Infantry passed through Digos and pushed northeast toward Davao.

As the 19th Infantry moved to the northeast, strong enemy defensive positions were uncovered. However, the enemy had chosen not to man them. By 29 April the Digos area had been secured and the 19th Infantry had reached Santa Cruz. (See Map D)

Although the enemy resistance to the forward advance of the 24th Infantry Division had been practically non-existent, continual light attacks were being made against the long and narrow supply route. (70) The division countered these attacks by using elements of the 21st Infantry and attached guerrilla units, to patrol the route south from Kaban. (71) (See Map D)

(68) (69) A-2, p. 34; (70) A-2, p. 136; (71) A-2, p. 35.

As the 19th Infantry approached Davao, enemy fire was received from the foothills overlooking the entrance to Davao from the west. The 2d Battalion, 19th Infantry, was committed against this resistance, while the remainder of the regiment continued the movement on Davao. Crossing the Davao River was expected to constitute a major obstacle to the advance. However, a wooden bridge near the mouth of the river was found intact and provided an adequate crossing site. The 3d Battalion, 19th Infantry, entered Davao on 3 May, retarded only by sniper fire and a considerable number of booby traps and mines. By the end of the next day the city had been secured. (See Map D) (72)

As portions of the 21st Infantry followed the 19th Infantry and arrived in the Talomo area, they were turned to the north on the Mintal Talomo road to provide protection for the flank of the rapidly advancing 19th Infantry. (73)

During the period 17 April to 4 May, the 24th Infantry Division had moved approximately 140 miles. The use of the river route had provided a major impetus to the rapidity of the advance. The enemy had not vigorously resisted the movement. The liberation of the city of Davao had climaxed the drive of the division and completed one of the major tactical missions of the campaign. However, the enemy forces in the south were still intact and capable of organized resistance. Therefore, the remaining mission of the destruction of the enemy forces was to prove a difficult task. (74)

(72) A-2, p. 48; (73) A-9, p. 5; (74) A-2, p. 49.

ACTION IN CENTRAL AND NORTHERN MINDANAO

31st Infantry Division and 108th Infantry Regimental Combat Team

The 31st Infantry Division (less 2d Battalion, 167th Infantry) arrived offshore Parang on 23 April, 1945. Landings by the division were made at Malabang, Parang and Cotobato. The 3d Battalion, 155th Infantry, 31st Infantry Division, landed at Malabang to relieve the 3d Battalion, 21st Infantry, 24th Infantry Division, and continue the security of the air field in that area. (75) The 124th Infantry Regimental Combat Team landed at Cotobato while the remainder of the division landed at Parang. The landings in the Parang and Cotobato areas facilitated the movement of the division inland since both the river and the highway routes were used. (See Map E)

The 31st Infantry Division moved to the vicinity of Kabakan and relieved the elements of the 24th Infantry Division still being employed on security missions along the routes of advance from Parang to Kabakan. (76) (See Map E) The movement to Kabakan was completed on 27 April as the 124th Regimental Combat Team used the river route while the 155th Regimental Combat Team, plus other elements of the 31st Infantry Division, used the highway route. The 167th Infantry (less 2d Battalion) remained in Parang to provide security for the supply routes and base installations. (77) (See Map E)

As stated earlier, the isolation of the enemy forces in the south (Davao area) was a part of the over-all plan

(75) A-4, p. 69; (76) A-2, p. 38; (77) A-4, p. 103.

at this time. (78) To accomplish this, it was believed necessary to control the Kibawe - Talomo Trail 60 miles north of Kabakan. (See Map E) This trail was considered to be the most important link between the forces in the Davao area and those located in the central area of Mindanao. (79)

The 31st Infantry Division began its move to the north to secure this trail on 27 April. Leading the division was the 124th Infantry, to be followed by the 155th Infantry.

The 124th Infantry commenced the movement at 1800 hours with the 2d Battalion leading. Travelling during the hours of darkness, the leading elements of the regiment made contact with a Japanese force. Resistance by the enemy was heavy, and the advance was halted for the remainder of the night. The Japanese forces continued to attack the column with little success. (80)

The next morning the 3d Battalion, 124th Infantry, passed through the 2d Battalion and continued the attack. Resistance was continual, consisting mostly of delaying actions and road blocks. (81)

On 30 April, the leading elements of the division crossed the Mulita River under the cover of strong air support. (See Map E)

The movement of the motorized elements of the 31st Infantry Division was slowly grinding to a halt because of the condition of the road and the numerous destroyed bridges on the highway. Engineer effort was unable to perform the

(78) A-2, p. 39; (79) A-2, p. 66; (80) A-2, p. 38; (81) A-4, p. 54.

additional work load necessary to sustain the forward movements of motor elements of the division. With this situation existing, the infantry units were soon beyond the range of the supporting arms of the division. (82)

On 1 May, the 1st Battalion, 124th Infantry, took the lead in the advance toward the junction of Route 3 and Kibawe - Talomo Trail and secured it late in the evening of that day.

With the trail junction secured by the 31st Infantry Division, the two largest forces of the enemy were separated and isolated from one another. This facilitated their defeat in detail. Also the movement of the 31st Infantry Division to the south along the Kibawe - Talomo Trail could be launched.

However, after the 31st Infantry Division had secured the junction of the trail and Route 3, a revised plan was initiated. (83) The new plan outlined the primary mission of the 31st Infantry Division as a movement north to clear Route 3 together with complete destruction of the enemy in its zone.

The tentative plan was not employed because aerial reconnaissance, ground patrols and guerrilla reports at this time began to substantiate the fact that the trail was impassable a short distance south of the Pulangi River. The Kibawe - Talomo Trail was not disregarded completely. It was decided that constant pressure on the enemy forces located on the trail would be maintained. (84)

(82) A-4, p. 54; (83) (84) A-2, p. 66.

As the 167th Infantry was relieved of its mission of security of the supply routes from Parang to Kabakan by the 168d Infantry (less 3d Battalion), 41st Infantry Division, it moved to the Kibawe area. Upon arrival on 10 May, the 167th Infantry relieved the 155th Infantry and began its operation on the trail.

To accomplish the mission of destruction of the enemy to the north, the 31st Infantry Division (less 167th Infantry) began to move north from Kibawe on 5 May with the 124th Infantry leading. The first objective of the division was to seize the air strips in the vicinity of Maramag. (See Map E) Advance was rapid until the leading elements approached Lake Pinalay where strong, well-prepared enemy positions astride the highway were encountered. (85)

Again, bad road conditions and destroyed bridges caused delay of the division artillery and other motorized elements of the 31st Infantry Division.

The largest ground support weapon available to the leading elements was the 4.2 Chemical Mortar. Close support by air craft was called for and assisted materially in softening up the defensive positions during the period 7 to 10 May. The 1st and 2d Battalions launched an attack on 10 May utilizing the 4.2 mortars and close support by air craft. This attack was unsuccessful.

As the 1st and 2d Battalions, 124th Infantry, were maintaining contact and pressure on this defensive line, the 3d Battalion, 124th Infantry was sent to the west, by-passing the enemy positions and was successful in seizing the air

(85) A-4, p. 55.

strip #1 in the vicinity of Maramag on 10 May. (See Map E) Artillery units of the 31st Infantry Division began to arrive within supporting range on 10 May, and with their support plus additional air support, the enemy positions confronting the 1st and 2d Battalions were overrun on 12 May. (86)

During this period, the 155th Infantry was patrolling in the Kibawe area pending the arrival of the 167th Infantry from Kabakan. Relief of the 155th Infantry by the 3d Battalion, 167th Infantry, was completed on 10 May, and the 155th Infantry moved north passing through the 124th Infantry on 13 May. (87)

At this time the landing of the 108th Infantry Regimental Combat Team in the vicinity of Bugo on 10 May provided an added impetus to the drive to clear the highway. Continuation of the march north was made on 14 May as the 155th Infantry moved rapidly to Maramag Air Strip #2 and Valencia. It was surprising that no opposition was encountered during this advance since previous G-2 estimates had stated that Japanese activities in the area indicated their preparation of positions for a final defensive stand in the Valencia, Malaybalay and Impalutao area. (88) Movement by the 155th Infantry continued and on 23 May contact was made with the 108th Infantry Combat Team in the Impalutao area. (See Map E) (89) After contact was established the 108th Infantry Combat Team was attached to the 31st Infantry Division.

(86) A-2, p. 39; (87) A-2, p. 40; (88) A-2, p. 41; (89) A-4, p. 69.

The 108th Infantry Combat Team landing at Bugo had been unopposed and with the exception of minor actions, their movement to the south was rapid. The enemy retreated before their advance, moving toward the mountains east of Malaybalay. (90)

Meanwhile, farther to the south, the 167th Infantry employed on the Kibawe - Talomo Trail was encountering stiff resistance and the daily advances were measured in yards.

As in the Davao area, the tactical mission of the 31st Infantry Division and the 108th Infantry Regimental Combat Team was completed. Highway #3 was clear of the enemy; many cities and towns had been liberated; and the air fields along the route were under American control. The complete annihilation of the enemy remained to be accomplished.

The Japanese forces in Central Mindanao lacked unity of command and a singleness of effort; hence their defeat in detail by American forces was completed in rather rapid fashion.

To complete the destruction of the enemy, the 31st Infantry Division with 108th Infantry Combat Team attached, turned its effort to the east. With units in place along Highway #3 as shown on Map E, five columns were directed to the east. (91)

The operations in Silea and Cabanglasan and other areas in the vicinity were characterized by local actions normally on a battalion scale.

On the Kibawe - Talomo Trail the 167th Infantry continued its mission of destroying the enemy. The pattern followed

(90) A-2, p. 43; (91) A-2, p. 70.

that of many other campaigns in the Pacific where the Japanese were hunted down like animals and completely exterminated.

ACTION IN THE DAVAO AREA

24th Infantry Division 4 May to 26 June

With the capture of Davao and the clearing of the enemy from the Digos and Talomo areas, the 24th Infantry Division began its difficult task of total destruction of the enemy.

The clearance of the coast line in the vicinity of Talomo permitted the establishment of supply installations to support the final phase of the operation. The movement of supplies from Parang via the overland route had been extremely difficult during the advance inland. The continual use of combat elements to provide security had constituted a serious drain on the efficiency of the attacking force. To counteract this undesirable situation the trans-shipment of supplies from the Parang area to the Talomo beaches by sea route was begun immediately. (92)

Although the 24th Infantry Division controlled the coast line from Digos to Davao, the terrain to the northwest of Davao provided excellent defensive positions and observation for the enemy. The enemy had prepared the defensive works in an extensive fashion, and the observation afforded by the terrain would have made accurate firing in to the 24th Infantry Division area an easy matter. (93) However, the enemy did not choose to disrupt the activities

(92) A-2, p. 137; (93) A-9, p. 13.

to any great extent.

During the period 4 May to 15 May, the combat elements of the 24th Infantry Division were disposed with the 3d Battalion, 34th Infantry, in the Guma area; the 21st Infantry on the Talomo - Mintal road and west of the Talomo River. The 34th Infantry (less 3d Battalion) was on the right of the 21st Infantry between the Talomo and Davao Rivers. The 2d Battalion, 19th Infantry, was in the vicinity of Hill 550, with the 19th Infantry (less 2d Battalion) in the Davao area. (See Map F) The action during this period was a prelude to the difficult task which faced the 24th Infantry Division.

In the 3d Battalion, 34th Infantry, area at Guma, resistance by the enemy was stiff and determined. The excellent coordination and full use of air support, coupled with intense artillery fire materially assisted in subduing the enemy. By 12 May the enemy had been cleared from the area and the 3d Battalion, 34th Infantry, moved east to join the remainder of the 34th Infantry in the Talomo area. (See Map F) (94)

The 21st Infantry in the Talomo area moved toward the town of Mintal. Immediate and stubborn resistance by the enemy was encountered. On 8 May as the 2d and 3d Battalions, 21st Infantry, attacked along the road in an effort to move on Mintal, the 1st Battalion swung to the left and forced a crossing of the Talomo River north of Mintal. The enemy reacted to this maneuver vigorously making repeated counterattacks against the 1st Battalion position. Many casualties

(94) A-2, p. 50.

were inflicted on both sides and on 10 May the American Force was required to withdraw. (95)

Farther to the west, the 34th Infantry attempted to drive on Mintal and establish contact with the 21st Infantry. Advances were slow and costly. The terrain again provided the defender with a tremendous advantage. Swamps, coconut groves, abaca groves and many gullies and ravines made the ground ideal for defense. (96) The abaca plant is used to make the famous Manila Hemp. These plants normally grow about 12 feet high. There were many groves of abaca in the Davao sector which had grown to 20 feet and were very dense because the War had not permitted their harvest. These groves were one of the most difficult areas to navigate and were ideal for the Japanese type of defense. (97)

In the Hill 550 area, the 2d Battalion, 19th Infantry, began their attack on 10 May to seize this critical terrain feature overlooking Davao. For five days, repeated attempts were made to assault the hill with little success. On 15 May, the 2d Battalion, 34th Infantry, relieved the 2d Battalion, 19th Infantry. The relieved battalion moved to Davao to join the remainder of the 19th Infantry. (See Map F)

The 19th Infantry (less 2d Battalion), after entering the city of Davao, made a limited advance as far as Cabaguio to the north of the city. (98) A few days after Davao was secured, K Company, 19th Infantry, was loaded in assault craft at Davao Harbor and dispatched to Samal Island to reduce the naval artillery positions emplaced there. (See Map F)

(95) A-2, p. 53; (96) A-2, p. 59; (97) A-9, p. 5; (98) A-2, p. 52.

These artillery positions had continually harassed the 19th Infantry after their arrival in Davao and one salvo had hit the 62d Portable Surgical Hospital causing some casualties. The rifle company did not accomplish the task, and it was necessary to commit the remainder of the 3d Battalion, 19th Infantry, to complete the mission. (99)

The determined resistance and well-prepared defensive positions of the enemy made it apparent that additional troops were necessary and on 8 May the 3d Battalion, 162d Infantry, 41st Infantry Division, arrived in the Davao area from Parang. The battalion was assigned the mission of security in the area between Talomo and Davao. (See Map F) (100)

On 11 May 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry, 41st Infantry Division, was attached to the 24th Infantry Division by the X Corps. At this time the X Corps also directed the 24th Infantry Division to accomplish the following missions:

"(1) Destroy hostile forces in the MINTAL-NORTH-WEST DAVAO AREA.

"(2) Destroy hostile forces in the Cabaguio-Sasa Airdrome Area and push strong reconnaissance along the Davao Gulf coast to effect a juncture with the 107th Division (PA).

"(3) Clear hostile forces and installations from Samal Island." (See Map F) (101)

To carry out this order it was evident that the effort of the 24th Infantry Division would necessarily be dispersed

(99) A-2, p. 54; (100) A-3, p. 53; (101) A-2, p. 54.

over a very wide front. (102) All three infantry regiments of the 24th Infantry Division were used to accomplish the assigned missions.

The main elements of the 19th Infantry moved to the northeast while a portion of the regiment continued the action on Samal Island. The 21st Infantry and 34th Infantry were committed in the Mintal area for the drive to the northwest.

The enemy to the northeast of Davao was reported to be composed of the Japanese Naval troops which had been stationed in the Davao area. At this time it became apparent that there was no unified effort by the enemy to weld the forces located northeast of Davao into the over-all defense plans. It was also believed that the enemy chain of command was not functioning properly since there appeared to be little effort of the Japanese Army and Navy forces to work together. (103)

The 19th Infantry (less the 3d Battalion on Samal Island) moved from Davao on 17 May to contact the guerrilla forces in the vicinity of the Tagum River. (See Map F) Although the enemy positions on the high ground a short distance from the coast would have permitted serious disruption of the advance, their tactics did not change, and the advance to the northeast was resisted only by delaying actions. (104) On 24 May, the 19th Infantry made contact with the guerrilla forces in the vicinity of the Tagum River. (105) (See Map F)

(102) A-9, p. 5; (103) A-9, p. 13; (104) A-9, p. 13;
(105) A-2, p. 56

The Japanese defensive positions northeast of Davao were located in the vicinity of Mandog and it was reported that the headquarters of the naval defending force was also located there. (See Map F)

The 19th Infantry plan for the reduction of this defensive area involved a three-pronged pincer movement by the three battalions of the regiment. The 3d Battalion began its attack on the defensive positions from Budbud on 29 May, while the 2d Battalion launched its attack from Panacan toward the same objective. The two battalion columns joined forces on 3 June about 2000 yards east of the town of Mandog. Meanwhile, the 1st Battalion, 19th Infantry, attacked to the northwest from the vicinity of the Sasa Airdrome. (See Map F)

By 9 June the attacking forces were in position to make the final assault on the enemy defensive positions. The 1st Battalion drove to the north while the 2d Battalion attacked to the west and the 3d Battalion pushed from the center position northwest. Again the enemy resistance was severe. All available supporting weapons were employed to blast the defensive positions. After six days of continual attacks through heavy rains, the remaining enemy positions were overrun and organized defense in the area ended. The attacking forces were relieved by guerrilla forces on 18 June. On 20 June the 19th Infantry began its movement to the northwest sector to assist the remainder of the 24th Infantry Division in its final assault to destroy the enemy. (See Map F)

While the 19th Infantry was operating in the northeast sector, the 21st Infantry and 34th Infantry attacked to destroy the enemy in the northwest sector. The Talomo River divided the zones of the two attacking regiments with the 34th Infantry attacking from the northeast while the 21st Infantry moved from the southwest to envelop the enemy defensive positions.

The attack of the 21st Infantry from the southwest was stubbornly resisted by the enemy. On 11 May a determined counterattack by enemy forces from Mintal was repulsed after heavy fighting. Beginning with two days of very short advances, the 21st Infantry launched a coordinated assault on the town of Mintal and entered it on 13 May, 1945. (See Map F) To exploit the success, the 2d Battalion, 21st Infantry was pushed forward toward Tugbok. The 2d Battalion advance was held up by organized resistance short of the town itself. However, with the use of all supporting arms, the town of Tugbok was secured on 19 May. (See Map F) At this time the 21st Infantry halted to wait for the 34th Infantry to clear its zone northeast of the Talomo River.

In the 34th Infantry sector progress was very slow. Determined enemy resistance was encountered, and the maximum use of all organic supporting weapons -- artillery and air craft -- was required to assist the 34th Infantry in the destruction of the enemy in its zone. By 18 May the 34th Infantry had advanced to a position due east of Mintal. (See Map F) Attempts were made to establish lateral contact with the 21st Infantry southwest of the river with no success. (106)

(106) A-2, p. 61.

As the 34th Infantry continued its attack to join the 21st Infantry on its left, another well-prepared defensive position near the Talomo River was uncovered. Two attacks on 23 and 24 May were made, but both were repulsed quickly by coordinated enemy fire consisting of automatic weapons, anti-tank guns and mortars. Here again the presence of the overgrown and dense abaca groves proved nearly unsurpassable to the American troops. The defenders took every advantage of the terrain. After an intense artillery preparation and a lengthy period of bombing, the attack of the 1st and 2d Battalions, 34th Infantry, was successful to the east of Tugbok on 25 May. (See Map F) (107)

In completing the attack, every available supporting weapon of the regiment had been employed, augmented by aircraft using high explosive and napalm bombs, and all artillery in the Davao area which was within supporting range. In addition, the maximum aggressiveness on the part of the individual infantryman to reduce each enemy position became of the utmost importance. (108)

With the 21st and 34th Infantry joining forces in the Mintal - Tugbok area, continual pressure was exerted on the enemy forces. The 34th Infantry pushed the attack to the north as the 2d Battalion captured Ula on 3 June supported by the 3d Battalion on its left flank. (See Map F) Concurrently, the 21st Infantry mopped up the area southwest of Mintal, capturing the town of Mulig, then Alambre and Tankulan in rapid succession. (See Map F) (109)

(107)A-2, p. 61; (108) A-9, p. 8; (109) A-2, p. 63.

As the 34th Infantry strengthened its hold on the Ula area, the 1st Battalion fanned out to the northeast occupying Biao and the 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry, attached, drove northwest capturing Riverside on 10 June. Meanwhile, the 21st Infantry shifted the impetus of its effort to the north and seized Wangan on 9 June. (See Map F) (110)

To relieve the fatigued troops of the 24th Infantry Division, X Corps on 6 June ordered the 162d Infantry to move from the Kabakan area to the Davao area using Route 1. The 162d Infantry (less 3d Battalion) arrived in the vicinity of Bago on 9 June and relieved the 34th Infantry on 13 June. (See Map F) (111) The 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry, was attached to the 162d Infantry at this time. The 34th Infantry returned to the rear for a well-earned rest.

Continuing the attack on 14 June the 162d Infantry and attached 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry, moved from Riverside, and the 21st Infantry moved from Wangan northwest to capture Calinan on 18 June. (112)

After having rested for six days, the 34th Infantry relieved the 21st Infantry in the Calinan area on 19 June. (See Map F) Resistance was slackening in all areas and the 34th Infantry swung to the west to occupy Malagos.

Also at this time the 19th Infantry moved into the Calinan area from the Mandog area after having been relieved by guerrilla units. The 19th Infantry and 34th Infantry then made a joint assault on to the northwest and on 26 June reached (110) A-2, p. 63; (111) A-6, p. 163; (112) A-2, p. 63.

Tamogan. Enemy resistance had been shattered. Mopping up in the Tamogan area continued until 30 June when the campaign was officially closed.

Even though the campaign was officially closed on 30 June, one final task force was organized by the 24th Infantry Division to search out and destroy the enemy reported to be in the Sarangani Bay area. (See Map B for location) (113)

The task force consisted of 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry, reinforced by a provisional anti-aircraft group acting as infantry; one field artillery battalion; and Philippine Army troops. (114)

This task force operated in the Sarangani Bay area until 11 August 1945, encountering roving Japanese forces which were easily wiped out. This action completed the difficult task of the destruction of enemy in the Mindanao Campaign.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In analyzing the two operations the scope ranges from the employment of a single infantry division during a rapid advance to a subsequent slugging battle with a determined enemy. Further, one must consider the unusual, but successful, use of infantry as a part of the river force.

The guerrilla activity on Mindanao must be considered as of tremendous value to the planners of these two operations. Although much of the information obtained from this

(113) (114) A-2, p. 75.

source was not completely accurate, it did serve to assist the staff in formulating their estimates prior to the operations. Guerrilla reports should be carefully studied by personnel having access to them. This is especially true of intelligence reports, since the guerrilla units are prone to over estimate the size of enemy units. Also due to their lack of military training, certain actions by the enemy which were of importance, were not always reported. In the VICTOR IV Operation the intelligence estimate stated that 54th and 55th Independent Mixed Brigades were in Zamboanga, while the action revealed that the two units were located differently. Although this did not affect the outcome of the operation, proper correlation and comparison of such reports with other order of battle procedures might well have eliminated this discrepancy. Also the report of the 800 enemy in the vicinity of Fort Pikit was indicative of the over estimation of the strength of the enemy by the guerrilla. Further, the lack of information on the condition of the Kibawe - Talomo Trail was undoubtedly partially due to the failure of the guerrilla units to evaluate and understand the importance of this trail.

The decision to base the one squadron of fighter aircraft at Dipolog in the early stages of the VICTOR IV Operation was completely sound and reflected proper initiative on the part of the commanders concerned.

The air bombardment of the beaches during the initial landings on Zamboanga Peninsula lacked the high degree of coordination between air and ground elements which was an

absolute necessity.

The use of tanks in terrain where the road net is limited and other trafficability features are lacking was brought out during the VICTOR IV Operation. The tank must have terrain over which it can maneuver and canalization of armor invites its loss. Also in such close terrain, tanks must have the maximum close support by accompanying infantry.

In terrain such as was encountered on the Zamboanga Peninsula, the necessity for flank security became increasingly important. The two regimental columns moving on widely separated axes of advance required the additional attention to both flanks.

The air strikes on Mount Daho during the Jolo operation, the air bombing of the enemy defenses in the Davao sector and the air support provided the 31st Infantry Division in the vicinity of Lake Pinalay showed excellent use of supporting arms by the commanders concerned.

The flexibility of planning both tactically and logistically was brought out in the VICTOR V Operation when the landing site was shifted from Malabang to Parang. Proper staff and command planning on all levels was evident during this phase. The ability of the assault forces to accept the decided change with the minimum of confusion required a high state of training.

The use of the river route in the VICTOR V Operation and the rather unorthodox employment of the infantry elements showed fore-thought and effective coordination of the highest degree.

The aggressive action of the 24th Infantry Division during the movement over land to Davao adhered to the principle of movement in every respect. Also the application of the surprise element was employed effectively.

It is believed that the failure of adequate engineer support, especially during the advance to the north by the 31st Infantry Division, might have been partially eliminated by the assignment of more engineer troops to the operation. With the prolific source of information available through the guerrilla units, a better estimate of the engineer requirements and consequent increase in engineer troops should have been made.

In considering the employment of the 108th Infantry Regimental Combat Team, it is believed that this force could well have been employed in a more decisive manner. Its employment in support of the 24th Infantry Division would have more clearly demonstrated the principle of mass. It is my opinion that the Davao sector should have been given more weight as it was the most decisive sector.

The enemy strength was greater in the Davao area and it is believed that one division was sufficient to perform the mission of clearing Highway #3 and destroying the enemy in the north.

During the VICTOR V Operation, the extensive use of large size units such as battalions of infantry to protect the long supply lines certainly had its effect on the overall combat power of the attacking forces.

The enemy facilitated maneuver by the American Forces by the disposition of his troops. The great distance be-

tween the two largest forces, together with the rugged terrain that intervened, made their mutual support difficult. Such disposition and lack of coordination permitted the American Forces to isolate them and brought about their defeat in detail.

The failure of the enemy to react vigorously to the movement of the 24th Infantry Division revealed his inability to institute alternate defense plans. Also during the movement of the 24th Infantry Division from Digos to Davao and on up the northeastern coast, the enemy permitted considerable freedom of action by the American Forces. The enemy observation from his defensive positions northwest of Davao was ideal for conducting heavy fire on the attacking forces. It is believed that a properly coordinated effort by the enemy would have seriously affected the situation at this time.

Unified command among the enemy forces was woefully lacking since the naval forces northeast of Davao and army forces northwest of Davao did not appear to conduct a coordinated defense.

The X Corps order to the 24th Infantry Division on 11 May to conduct the two widely separated missions at the same time was, in my opinion, unsound. Such a requirement at that time split the American Forces when the enemy northwest of Davao was still intact and could very well have been capable of concerted offensive action. The contacting of the guerrilla forces appeared to have no particular effect on the outcome of the campaign. The principle of mass was again violated here.

To sum up the two operations, it is believed that the comments of the Commanding General, 24th Infantry Division, on the VICTOR V Campaign apply equally well to both operations. The Commanding General, 24th Infantry Division, said in part:

"It is realized that in this operation there is nothing new and certainly nothing Napoleonic. The Division Commander is more than ever impressed as a result of this operation by the soundness of the tactical doctrine taught at the Command and General Staff School. The greatest difficulty encountered was either the ignorance of the doctrine or the inability of the individual commander to make it effective in the situation as he found it." (115)

LESSONS

1. Guerrilla intelligence reports must be carefully correlated and compared with other available data.
2. Coordination between supporting air elements and ground units is a necessity.
3. In jungle and mountain operations the requirements of engineer support will usually increase.
4. The mobility of tanks in close terrain is limited and maximum protection by accompanying infantry is required.
5. In jungle and mountain operations the adequate protection of the flanks and rear are of extreme importance.

(115) A-9, p. 15.

LESSONS (Continued)

6. Aggressiveness is a pre-requisite to all
leaders in combat.

7. Flexible and alternate plans must be provided
for every operation.

8. In rapid advances the protection of routes of
communication by elements of the combat force is to be ex-
pected and should be considered in advance.

9. Attacking infantry must make maximum use of
all supporting weapons.

10. Isolation of enemy forces facilitates their
defeat in detail.

11. Divergence of effort in the face of an organ-
ized enemy may well invite defeat.

12. The elements of surprise and rapid movement
invite quick success.

13. Unity of command is required in any military
operation.

14. Each effort must be weighted and the prepon-
derance of troops should be employed in the most decisive
sector.